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CONGRESS. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Thursday, February 8.

MR. Bayard, from the committee appointed to prepare and report on an uniform system of bankruptcy, reported a bill which was committed for Monday next.

The Chairman read over the resolution which had been reported by the committee of privileges, for the adoption of the house which was the following words:

“Resolved, That Matthew Lyon, a member of this house, for a violent attack and gross indecency, committed upon the person of Roger Griswold, another member, in the presence of the house while sitting, be for this disorderly behaviour expelled therefrom.”

Mr. Lyon rose, and spoke as follows:—

Mr. Chairman, I feel myself extraordinarily circumstanced, and accidentally drawn into a very serious situation merely by my ignorance of the House of Representatives being likely to take cognizance of an affair that happened when the members of the house were at their amusement and recreation; when every one was doing that which was right in his own eyes. How much was I supported in this opinion by the conduct of the Speaker, every gentleman may see by his testimony. He sat in a chair within the bar facing me as I stood without it. He spoke to me of my country and the conduct of some people there, concerning the stamp act. It appears, I turned the conversation towards Connecticut; it appears I had four or five other gentlemen's wit and raillery to bear, and this in hearing of the Speaker.

Does this look like the house being sitting?

How could I imagine this house was sitting when the Speaker suffered me to be interrupted when speaking to him by the remarks of four or five gentlemen.

How could I imagine the house was sitting, when the Speaker was joking me about an embassy to Kampschatka among the tur tribes?

How could I imagine the house was sitting, when I heard and knew the Speaker heard Mr. Griswold insult me, without checking him?

How could I imagine this house to be sitting when the Speaker suffered Mr. Griswold to proceed a second time with the most provoking insolence?

Had the house been sitting, I should not have been called on by Mr. Dana, with respect to something Mr. Williams had said, consequently I should not have entered into any conversation about Connecticut—the Speaker would not have spoken to me of Vermont, and I should not again have turned the subject to Connecticut, and Mr. Griswold would have postponed his premeditated insult; premeditated I say, because it has been proved that he had notice of my feelings and my determination on this subject.

Is it proper to say the house was sitting while half the members were standing round the table, while two thirds of the other half were walking round the bar, the Speaker engaged in a jocular conversation, and the few who remained in their seats, either in private conversation or writing letters?

But, Mr. Chairman, it seems, by the course this business has taken in the committee, that I am to be criminated for holding an indecate conversation within the hearing of the gentleman from Connecticut. Every one knows there are two different opinions entertained in this country with respects to the management of the government, and every one who knows me, knows that I am very free in speaking my opinion on these subjects. There are many, and I believe some in this House, who know something of the rough, illiberal manner, in which I have been treated in the New-England newspapers on account of my political opinion; and I believe there are many persons in this house, who are well acquainted with the kind of politeness which the gentlemen from Connecticut make use of towards their opponents; and some are acquainted with the share of politeness which those gentlemen deserve from me.

If the house are at a loss on this subject, they will, I hope, recur to the language made use of by Mr. Coit and Mr. Dana, in their testimony; and the house, I believe, will recollect a speech from a gentleman who sits behind me, in which he told the Committee twice or three times, that I was no gentleman.

Again, I say, Mr. Chairman, I am very extraordinarily situated. Evidence has been introduced into this house, to induce members to believe that I left Colonel Warner's regiment with dishonor; that I am a person of disrepute; that I have been in the habit of receiving insult with impunity. Here I am 350 miles from home, and from the evidence who are able to shew the contrary. Had I a reasonable opportunity, I could prove, by the Lieutenant Colonel, who is now General Safford, and several other officers of that regi-

ment—that when I left it, I left it with the regret of much the greater part of the officers, and all the soldiers. I mention the Lieut. Colonel, because Colonel Warner is not living.

My certificate of having settled my accounts, which is at home, would prove my having done my duty well.

I could prove my having taken my musket, and marched to the lines every day, during the siege of Burgoyne. I should not have mentioned this circumstance, had not the Speaker mentioned his having done so when Paymaster.

I could also prove, that when an officer offered me an insult, I chastised him before the officers of that regiment.

Mr. Champlin asked, whether the gentleman said he had chastised an officer, or would chastise him?

Mr. Lyon answered that I had chastised him.

I could prove that I took the commission in Colonel Warner's regiment, when I was driven from my plantation by Burgoyne's invasion; that I resigned my appointment, and left the regiment for the care of my family, for preferment, for honour, for superior office; and to serve the people of the state of Vermont.

I could prove, had I opportunity, that I was immediately appointed deputy secretary of the state, paymaster of the troops of Vermont, assistant treasurer, assistant to the commissioner of loans, and captain of the militia, besides being called on to act as private secretary to the Governor.

I could also prove that within two years from the time of that resignation, I was appointed secretary to the governor and council, a member of the legislature, clerk of the house of Assembly, one of a committee for the collection and revision of the laws and to a number of other offices under the authority of that state, besides a considerable number of offices in the municipal establishment of the town in which I lived, as well as my promotion to the command of a regiment, and all this before I formed a connection with one of the most respectable families in the state. I could prove also, that I have been member of the legislature of Vermont, except two years, ever since that I have been appointed to many other important offices which I did not think proper to serve in, such as auditor of the treasurer's accounts and judge of the county where I live.

By these things, and my standing in this house, I could prove that I have always been respected in the country I represent; and where I have lived these twenty-four years.

The free electors of my district have given me a preference to a gentleman of very great respectability, one who served six years with unimpeachable fidelity in this house, and is now chief justice of the state of Vermont, yet evidence has been adduced in order to shew that I am a person of disrepute.

As to my being in the habit of receiving insult with impunity, for which it seems Mr. Chipman's testimony was introduced, were I allowed to call testimony from Vermont, I could very easily prove so much on this head as, perhaps, to draw in question in the minds of some gentlemen that respectability which, in every other respect attaches to my character. Among other things, I could prove that the gentleman from Vermont, who was called to give testimony against me, has, with the politeness peculiar to a certain country which I will not now name, insulted me and received due chastisement from me for it.

Mr. Harper called to order. The gentleman from Vermont had already spoken improperly of witnesses, and he now spoke in a very reprehensible way of Mr. Chipman. He hoped he would be admonished.

Mr. Otis differed in opinion from the gentleman from S. Carolina. If the gentleman thought it would be of service to him to inform the committee that he had chastised an officer in the face of his regiment, or beaten a Judge of the Supreme Court, he was right in stating the circumstance.

Mr. Harper said, if he wished to see the gentleman disgrace himself and the house, he should not object to this mode of proceeding; but he did not.

Mr. Lyon. It would be folly in me to state any thing to this committee, that I cannot prove. Nor should I have mentioned that circumstance, had I not been charged with receiving injuries with impunity; nor did I come here to do so.—I would sooner leave the world. Mr. L. then proceeded.

Were I to be allowed time to bring forward testimony from Vermont, I could prove that my character, as a man of spirit, stands on such ground in my country, that I had no need to defend it, by entering into a squabble with such a chief justice in court time.

If the proof of these things be considered of importance, I hope I shall be allowed time to send to

Vermont to obtain it; for my own part I cannot so consider it. I must think that the House of Representatives ought never to have taken up the matter, of the difference between Mr. Griswold and myself, circumstanced as it was; and that if the House thought otherwise, the due submission to their authority which I have always stood ready to pay, and the sorrow which I have expressed, and am continually expressing, for my misapprehension, might serve as some mitigation of an offence against the dignity of this House which I never could have been guilty of.

After Mr. Lyon sat down, Mr. Champlin rose and spoke in favour of adopting the resolution; Mr. R. Williams however, gave his reason why he should vote against the resolution; and Mr. Harper followed with arguments for its adoption.

Friday, February 9.

Mr. Harper said, he was under necessity of performing a very disagreeable duty, it was a duty, however, which he found himself bound to perform, since no other member had thought proper to undertake it. It must be recollected, he said by many members of that house, that the member from Vermont, whose very extraordinary conduct has been for some time the subject of discussion, yesterday, at the conclusion of his defence, made use of an expression so outrageous, so gross and indecent, that no gentleman yet had been able to repeat it; and if this expression could have been buried in silence, he, for one, should have been in favour of its being so buried; but unfortunately, this could not be the case, it had not only been heard by many of the members, but by many strangers; and he was authorized to say, it was about to appear in one of the public gazettes of this city. As it would not, therefore, be kept from the public view, it was necessary to take such notice of it as it deserved. Before he made it the subject of a resolution, he should move that the chairman of the committee of the whole, who heard it, be requested to state precisely, in writing, the expression, and the time, place & manner in which it was uttered. He did not wish to put the gentleman to the painful task of repeating it; he wished only that he should state it in writing.

Mr. Otis said it would not be in his power to state the precise expression, as he did not hear the first part of the sentence. It was true he heard the offensive term.

Mr. Harper hoped he would state the offensive term, and the time and manner of using it.

The question for requesting the chairman to put the offensive expression to writing was carried 43 to 42.

Mr. Dent accordingly presented the offensive word to chair; which without being read, was referred to the committee of the whole, to whom was referred the report of the committee of privileges. The question for this reference was carried by the calling vote of the Speaker, there being 43 votes for it, and 43 against it.

The house then again resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the report of the committee of privileges. Mr. Dent in the chair; when a long debate ensued, which was opened by Mr. Shepard, in favour of the resolution. He was followed by Mr. Nicholas against it. Messrs. Otis, Rutledge, and Sargeants followed in favour of the resolution. The latter gentleman moved, to add to the resolution, as an amendment, “and for the gross indecency of language made use of in his defence before the committee of the whole.” This amendment was agreed to, after some debate, 48 to 43.

The amendment being incorporated with the resolution, Mr. Gallatin spoke against agreeing to it as amended.

There seemed to be a great desire, very loudly expressed, that the question should be taken before the committee rose; but Mr. Sewall and Mr. Rutledge both appeared to have a desire to speak on the subject, and it being near four o'clock, the committee rose and had leave to sit again.

Just before the committee rose, the Chairman informed them that he had received a letter from Mr. Chipman of the Senate, in consequence of what had fallen from Mr. Lyon, in his defence of yesterday. The letter was requested to be read, & was as follows:

Sir,
I feel it my duty, in this public manner, to vindicate myself against an unwarranted attack on my character, by Mr. Lyon, yesterday in the House of Representatives—I learn that he there asserted, that he had chastised me publicly for an affront which I had given him.

* The expression alluded to we did not distinctly hear, as it was uttered in a lower tone of voice than the rest of his speech. We believe it was something like this: “I did not come here to have my—kicked by every body.”